

On the half shell they're the heroes four...

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

...In this day and age who could ask for more?

Well *me* for a start, that's who! If Partners in Kryme were taking requests, a half-decent comic book tie-in game wouldn't have gone amiss. Instead, the Amiga was blighted with *two* sewer-scraping duffers, inexplicably ported from exactly the same source!

Just because you got here in under half an hour, flashed your cow(abunga) eyes at me, and displayed T-U-R-T-L-E Power, don't expect me to throw you a slice of gloopy Italian Frisbee and pat you on the head.



Cowabunga!

Mirrorsoft have scooped the license of the year, Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles. The lovable reptiles will be appearing shortly on all formats. Mirrorsoft will be doing their own coding for the Spectrum, CPC and ST but will take port over code from the stateside game Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles for C64, PC and Amiga.

Confusion seems set to reign when the Mirrorsoft Hero package hits the streets because the Ultra (Konami's US Software house) Ninja game from the States is already on the shelves as an import. "Mirrorsoft could always ask for a stop to be put to the sales of the Ultra game, but there really doesn't seem much point" a Konami spokesperson offered. The final twist in this ironic tale is that it's Konami who sold the license to Mirrorsoft in the first place.

Regardless of the controversy it is beyond doubt one of the biggest ever potential licences. The heroes in half a shell have already grossed an incredible \$130 milion at the cinema box office, have their own comic, cartoon TV

series, hit record, appear in the Daily Mirror and have a whole lorry load of associated merchandise to ensure a high media profile even before the hype machine hits top gear.

Bitchinly tubular bodacious gossip hot off the press... well it was in September 1990. Extract taken from issue 14 of Amiga Format's news section.

In 1990, at the pinnacle of Turtlemania, developer, Unlimited (U.S.I.), ported the 1989 NES game Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles to the Amiga, while it was published in America by Ultra Games.



In Europe (except for Italy bizarrely enough) talk of such nefarious 'ninjas' was vetoed because our venerable powers that be decided any acknowledgement of their existence would encourage little Johnny to propel a shuriken at his sister's forehead in a pernicious, pre-pubescent re-enactment of Shinobi No Mono.

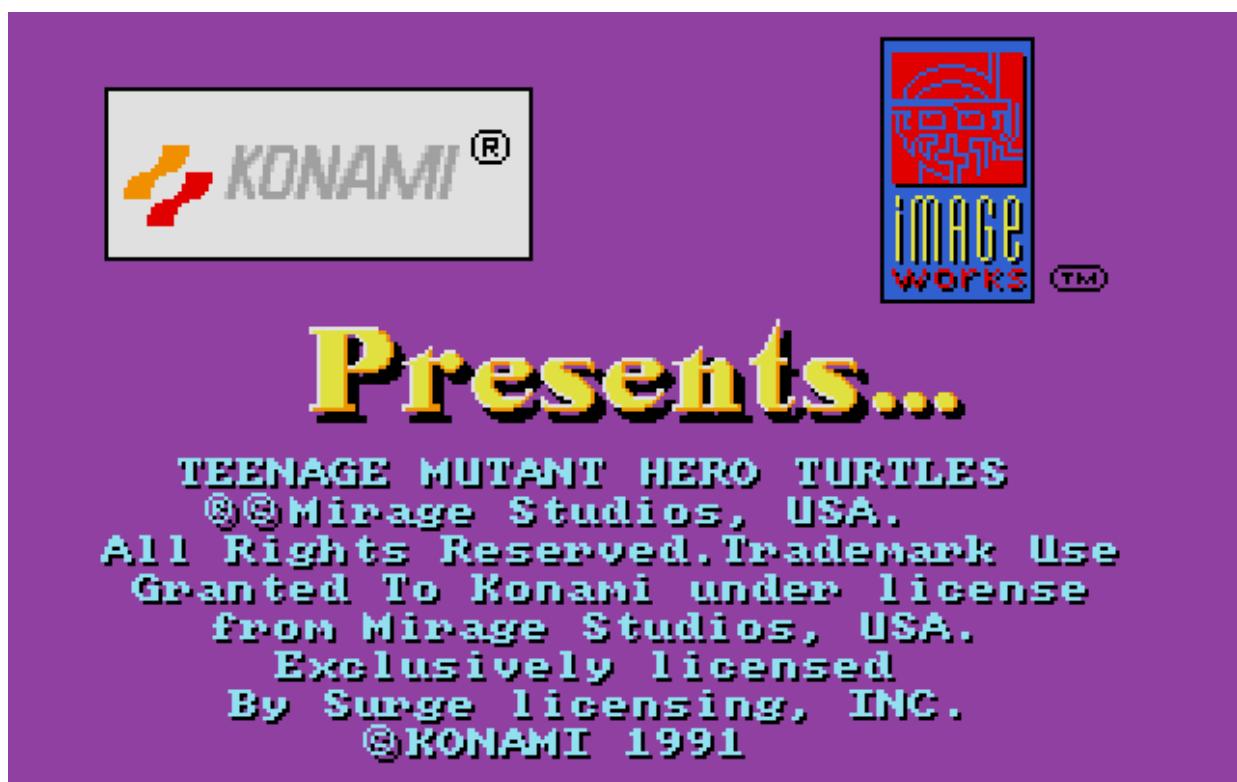


Personally, the hysterical furore didn't grip me at all. I resented being bludgeoned with someone else's definition of 'cool', and coerced into embracing the desperate '90s 'tude that infected all aspects of our culture during the era. He-Man would have skewered their slimy butts with the Sword of Grayskull in a heartbeat. I was maverick, way ahead of the game as a kid; I knew nerdy would be the new cool *eventually*, but I digress.

So in the same year the dismantling of the Berlin wall commenced, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait thereby instigating the Gulf War, and Nelson Mandela was freed from his 27 year-long incarceration, the UK government was busy debating how best to censor a kid's cartoon starring four anthropomorphic, nuclear-mutated amphibians named after Italian Renaissance artists.

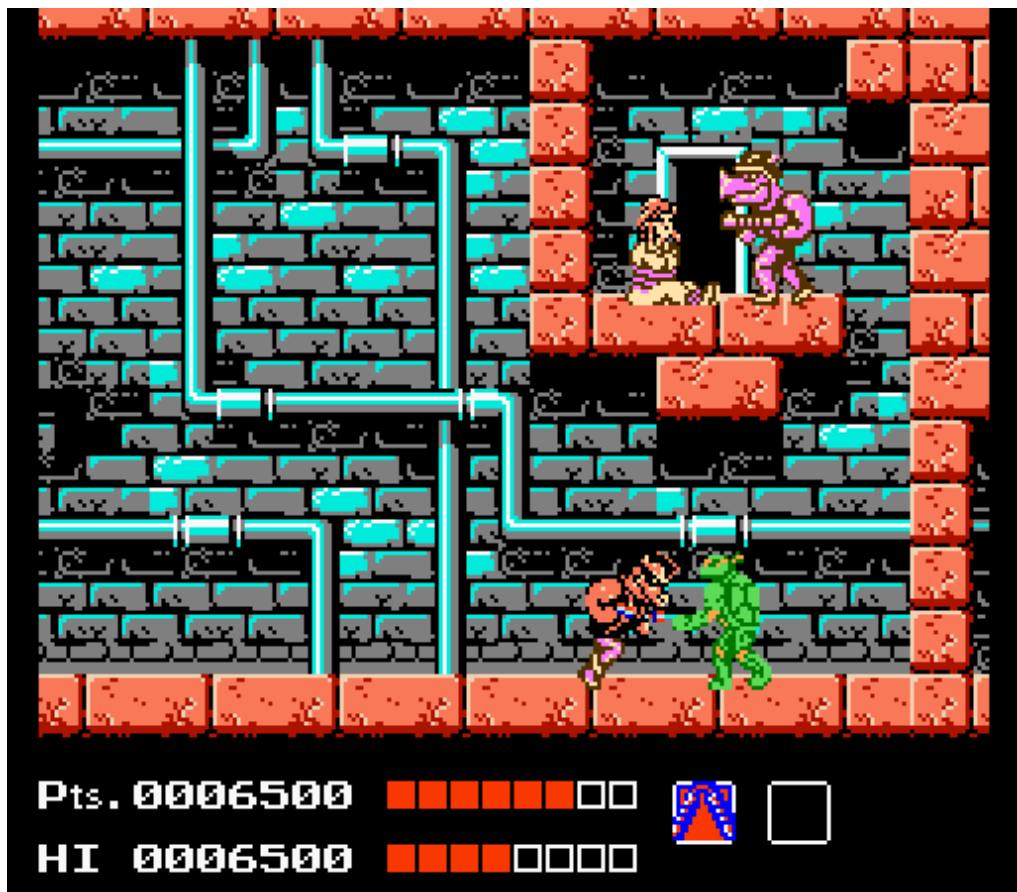
Their solution was to swap the taboo word for 'hero' and pressurise the TV execs into purging all references to the ancient Japanese martial art from the cartoon and spin-off

merchandise. This explains why the first Turtles game we experienced in Europe was a sanitised affair with a less punchy title, but not at all why the European publishers, Mirrorsoft, felt the need to draft in a different developer, Daisysoft, to rewrite the entire game from scratch, despite the intention being to once again port the game from the original NES version. Surely they could have commissioned U.S.I. to 'find and replace' the offending word?



Let's take a closer look at the source of this lethally evil force.

TMNT for the NES is loosely based on the 1987 animated series, incorporating a mixture of Zelda-esque overhead map exploration segments and side-scrolling platform action. Konami owned the rights to publish the game, though due to Nintendo's quality control stipulation limiting the number of titles (to five) that a third party could release in the US in the same year, it was published under the name of their shell company, Ultra Games.

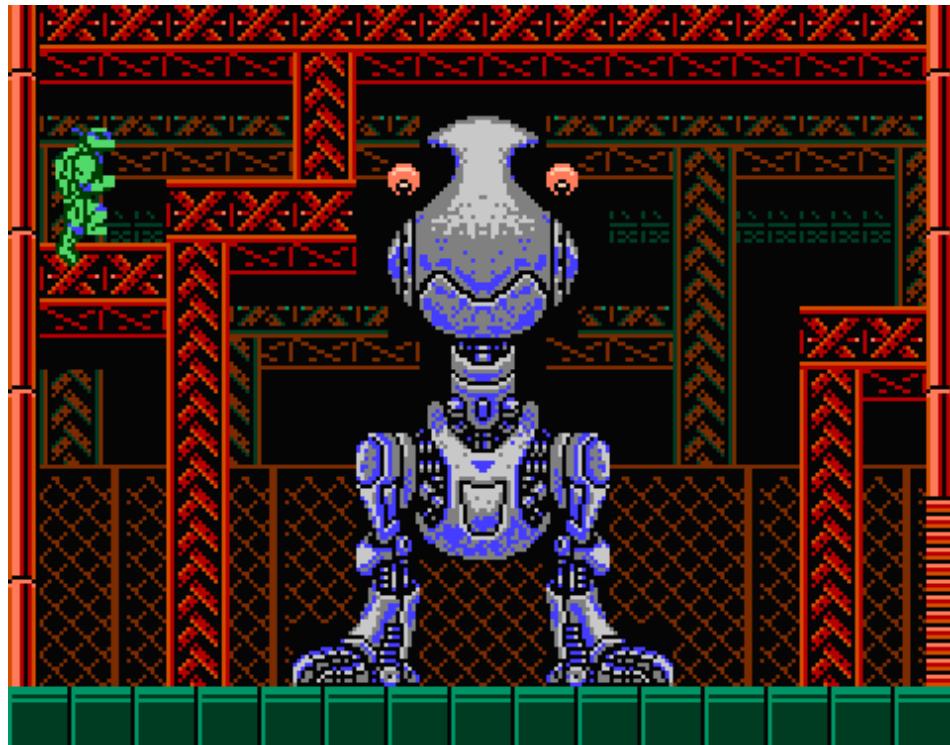


Playing alternately as the four surfer-wannabe radical dudes, it's our objective to rescue Turtle-sympathising reporter, April O'Neil, from the clutches of the dastardly Bebop and Rocksteady. As well as transforming Splinter back into a human by recovering the Life Transformer device from Shredder.

Helpfully scattered throughout the diverse overhead, underwater and platformy stages are an array of power-ups, weapons, and pizzas to restore our energy (it should come as no surprise that both Domino's Pizza and Pizza Hut have a long-standing history of Turtley awesome product placement).

With its seemingly impossible jumps and illogical play mechanics, TMNT is renowned for being obtusely difficult,

sailing whisper-close to invoking the Angry Video Game Nerd's seventeenth brain haemorrhage.

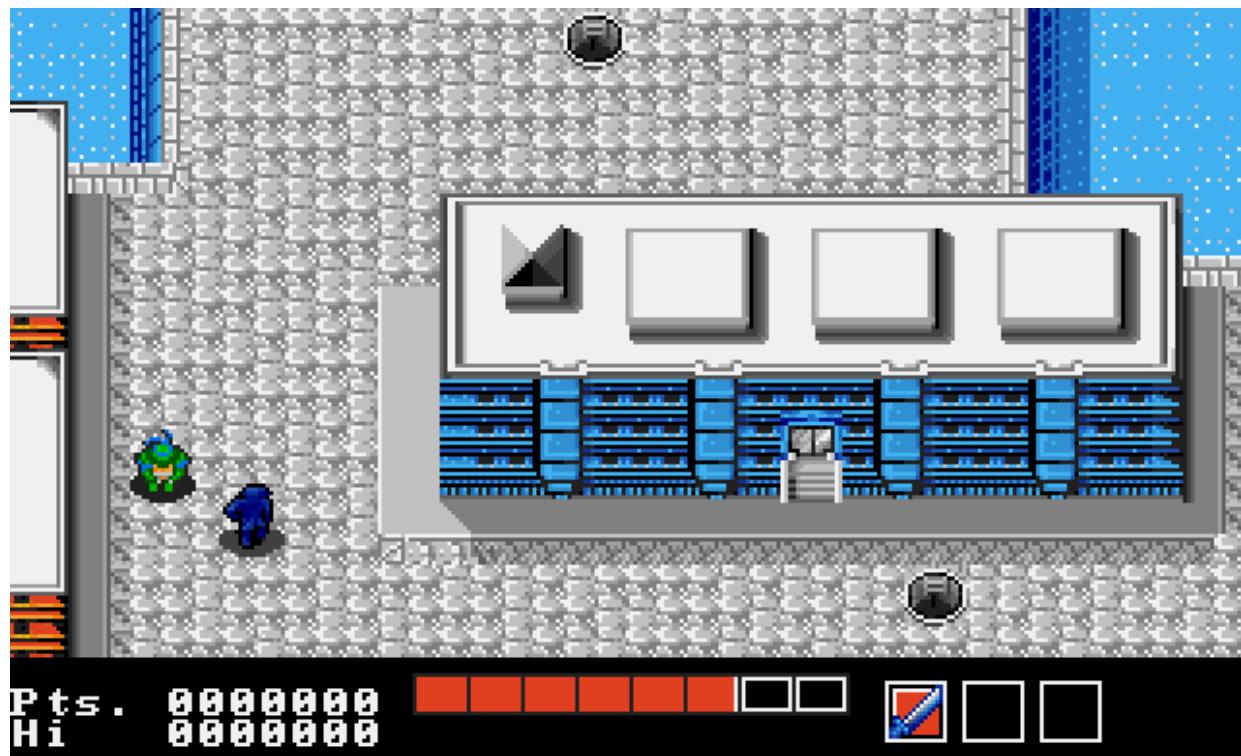


Many players are convinced that death by sewer juice is a major plot hole given that this is home sweet home for the Turtles. They may well be right seeing as they can swim perfectly well in the Hudson River, which at the time was likely to be many times more toxic than even New York's underground effluent cesspit thanks to General Electric who contaminated it with an estimated 1.3 million pounds of fly-tipped polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) between 1947 and 1977.

Given the choice, I'd rather not go skinny dipping in either watery death trap. That said, since 2016 humpback whales have been spotted swimming in the Hudson River, suggesting that the clean-up operation kick-started by Pete Seeger's Clearwater Festival is finally reaping the rewards.

Loved and hated in equal measure, TMNT sold in excess of 4 million copies making it one of the NES's all-time most popular titles. Of course, the critics were wasting their analytical breath; a franchise juggernaut of Turtles proportions was predestined to be a sure-fire best-seller, as were the action figures, vehicles, play sets, breakfast cereal, costumes and toilet seats.

TMNT was ported to the usual 8-bit platform trio, as well as the MSX, DOS, the Atari ST, and of course the Amiga, twice!



U.S.I.'s US 'Ninja' interpretation is buggy and sluggish with blocky graphics and tinny audio that wouldn't feel out of place on Nintendo's 8-bit console. The best things in life are worth waiting for. This isn't one of them, though you'll certainly spend plenty of time twiddling your thumbs while it crunches and grinds through its loading routines.

Floaty controls are equally off-kilter in that we must press the fire button and then push the joystick in the direction we

wish to strike, holding it down in isolation to prompt a crucially postponed jump. When you've taken the trouble of pre-empting the necessity for an upcoming jump, you better make sure you're facing in the right direction since our protagonists are incapable of modifying their course mid-air.

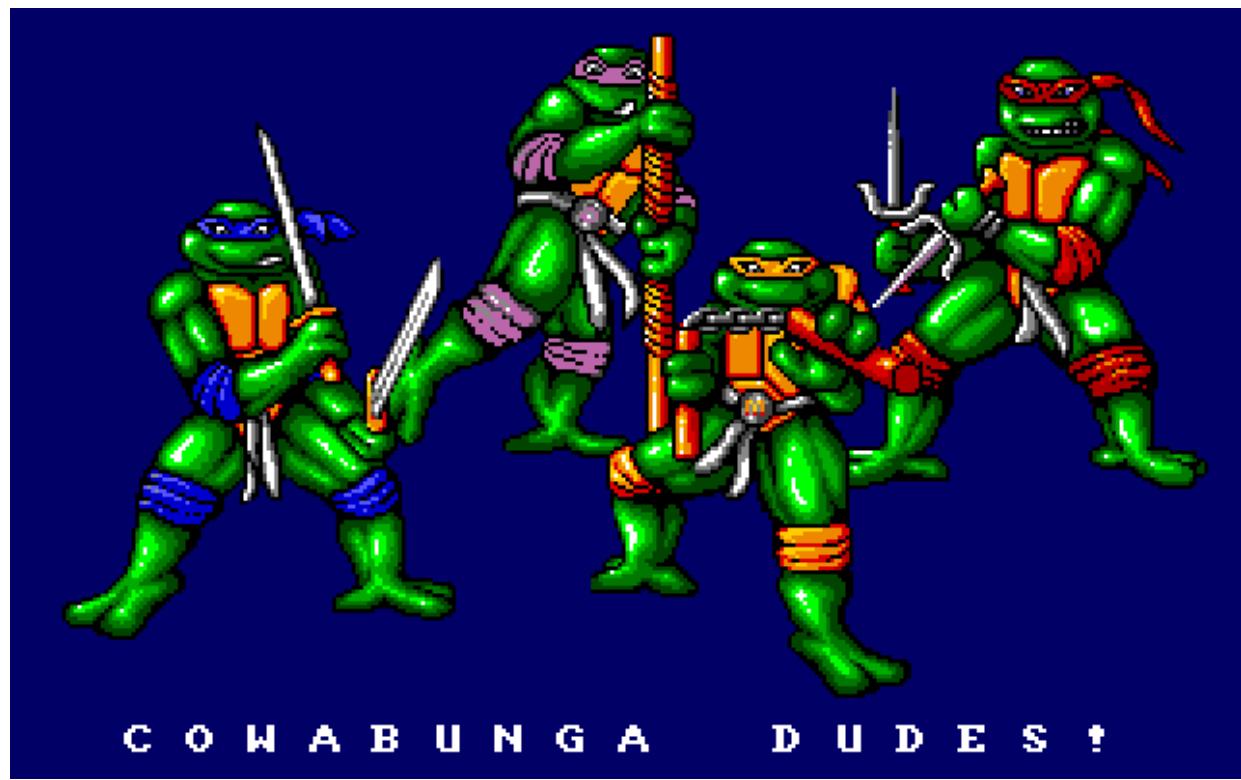
Daisysoft's jerky 'Hero' incarnation is almost as uninspiring. Graphics, whilst remaining primitive, are far more vibrant and intricate, and the sound, albeit repetitive, is more substantial so as to at least give the impression it's being emitted from a 16-bit machine.

Controlwise, little improvement is offered over the US release. We are unable to move and attack simultaneously, the dubious feat of ascending ladders pushing us to the brink of insanity. As will attempting to jump in the vicinity of a doorway without accidentally entering it.





If the title hadn't already given away that this is a Turtles game, I might not have understood the significance of the road-kill sensei squirrel, or the frumpy lady in the yellow jumpsuit who looks like she's been buried for several months and then dug up to be strapped to a rocking chair in a blood-curdling approximation of life. Actually, April shares the iconic Morticia vibe in either flavour.



Had you been insistent on your Ninja Turtle games using the authentic terminology, you *could* have imported the US version via your favourite software vendor at an exorbitant price, rendering all this government nannying null and void.

You'd have been committing high treason, be hung, drawn and quartered in Her Majesty's dungeon for your subterfuge, and more crucially, have to contend with potential NTSC/PAL compatibility issues, but in the ultimate pyrrhic victory, you'd have fought the law ...*and* won.

If TMNT taught you nothing else, never forget to...

Fight for rights and your freedom to speak.

Now the villain is chillin' so you make a stand.

Back to the wall, put your sword in your hand.

Remember the words of your teacher, your master:

"Evil moves fast, but good moves faster!"

